I: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

648 On first learning of the incident, months before the diplomatic correspondence began, the state and federal authorities promptly adopted vigorous punitive measures. A vessel carrying a force of federal troops was dispatched from Guaymas and a body of state troops were sent from Hermosillo with instructions to meet on the coast and capture the criminals at any cost, even to the extermination of the tribe if resistance was offered. But like so many others, the expedition failed; the horses of the land party were stalled in the sands and burrow-riddled plains, the vessel was harassed by storms and tidal currents, and the landing boats were swamped by the surf, while the Indians merely fled at sight of the invaders toward inaccessible lairs or remote parts of their territory; and when the water was gone and men and animals were at point of famishing, the forces retired without so much as seeing a single Seri.

During the ensuing autumn the tribe, having quenched their blood-feud in alien blood, turned toward peace, and sent a matron of the Turtle clan, known as Juana María, to Costa Rica—i. e., Rancho de San Francisco de Costa Rica—where she was gradually followed by younger matrons and children, then by youths, and finally by warriors (after the fashion of Seri diplomacy) to the aggregate number of about sixty.
124 Here they were found by the first expedition of the Bureau of American Ethnology, in November, 1894; and here, under the still strong influence of the venerable Don Pascual, supplemented by small gifts and persistent pressure, they gradually "gave their language", submitted to extensive photographing, confessed specifically to the Robinson killing, and yielded up nearly the whole of their portable possessions in the way of domestic implements and utensils, face-painting material, pelican-skin robes, snake-skin necklaces, etc.

648 With the return of the Bureau party to Hermosillo the Indians became restive and soon withdrew beyond the desert. In the course
721 of the ensuing winter a group returned to the neighborhood of Costa Rica, where, by aid of strategy, seven warriors (including some of those seen at the rancho in the preceding November) with the families of four, were arrested, taken to Hermosillo, tried, and, according to oral accounts, banished. Irritated by this action, and connecting with it the visit of Don Pascual and the strangers desiring their language and sacred things, the clans resumed the warpath, displaying special animosity toward the residents of Costa Rica. There were a few minor skirmishes; then, at the instance of the state officials, a number of Papago Indians, who are feared by the Seri beyond all other enemies, were domiciled at the rancho, where their mere presence proved a sufficient protection. Meantime, according to apparently trustworthy press
648 accounts, two small exploring parties entered Seriland; the first consisted of seven prospectors, who kept well together until about to leave the territory, when one of their number fell behind—and his companions saw him no more, though they carefully retraced their trail beyond the

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

point at which he had stopped; the other was a German naturalist-prospector with two mozos (servant-companions), purporting to hail from Chihuahua, who started across the delta-plain of Rio Bacuache and Desierto Encinas with saddle animals, and never reappeared. 648

Then came the second expedition of the Bureau of American Ethnology, to which several Papago domiciled at Costa Rica were attached as guards. While the party were at the rancho the day before the first entrada into Seriland via Barranca Salina, a party of vaqueros from Rancho Santa Ana tended a herd of stock to the barranca for water; one of the animals strayed behind a dune, and the vaqueros, following its trail, came on a small band of Seri already devouring the entrails, and attacked them so vigorously that they escaped only by outrunning the horses, leaving behind all their unattached possessions, including a bow and quiver of arrows and an ancient and nonusable army rifle. This incident, albeit typical, was untimely, and doubtless aided in rendering the Indians too wild to permit communication with the aliens during the ensuing weeks spent in their territory. 123 648

After the withdrawal of this expedition the Seri resumed their range over the borderland plain, with the evident intention of avenging the insult of the invasion. There were a number of skirmishes, in which some of the Papago guards of the 1895 expedition were wounded and had horses killed under them, though they did customary execution on the worse-armed Seri; and extensively published press items indicate that, toward the end of January, 1896, a party of five gold prospectors landed on Tiburon, whence one escaped. 648 721

A well-attested episode enacted toward the end of 1896: Captain George Porter and Sailor John Johnson spent the later part of the summer in cruising the coasts of the Gulf, collecting shells, feathers, and other curios in the small sloop *World*. About the end of October they apparently anchored in Bada Ballena; and a day or two later Captain Martin Mendez, of Guaymas, in charge of the schooner *Otila*, being driven up the gulf and into Bahia Kunkaak by storms, came on a horde of Seri hosting Porter's vessel. The episode received publicity on Mendez's return to Guaymas; United States Consular Agent Crocker instituted inquiries, and Governor Corral sent a force to Costa Rica, where, after some delay, a parley was held with a strong band of Seri under the chiefship of "a seven-foot warrior named El Mudo (The Mute), . . . so called for his reticence of speech."[1] The testimony obtained at the parley and from Captain Mendez indicates that Porter and Johnson landed, or at least approached the shore, probably in a small boat; that they were met by a shower of arrows, under which Johnson immediately fell, while Porter defended himself with a shot- 648

[1] *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 16, 1896, p. 3. The details of the episode, including the correspondence of Consular Agent Crocker, were printed in the newspapers of San Diego (the place of residence of Porter and Johnson), as well as in those of San Francisco and other cities; and there was considerable correspondence concerning the matter with the State Department at Washington. Some reports recount that the bodies of Porter and Johnson were rent to fragments and devoured, but these details naturally lack confirmation. El Mudo's portrait appears in plate XII. [113]

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

between these stages and that next higher in the series with unparalleled clearness; their craft also displays an aberrant (and hence presumptively accultural) feature pertaining to the technolithic stage; and in so far as their craftsmen use the material typical of the age of metal they degrade it to the transitional substage between dominant zoomimicry and designless stone-using.

Viewed in the general light of their pacific industries, the Seri are, accordingly, among the most primitive of known tribes; their technic is in harmony with their esthetic, and also with their somatic and tribal characteristics, in attesting a lowly plane of development; while their industries, like their other demotic features, are essentially autochthonous.

WARFARE

Something is known of Seri warfare through the history of the centuries since 1540, and especially through the bloody episodes of the Encinas régime and the occasional outbreaks of the last decade or two. The available data clearly indicate that the warfare of the tribe complements their pacific industries in every essential respect.

As befits their primitive character, warfare has played an important rôle in the history of the folk, forming, indeed, one of the chief factors in determining the course of tribal development. There is no means of estimating the losses suffered and occasioned in warfare with the neighboring tribes during either prehistoric or historic times; but the indications are that they were much greater than the losses connected with Caucasian contact. Neither is it practicable to estimate reliably the fatalities attending the interminable conflicts with the Spanish invaders and their descendants, though it is safe to say that the Seri losses in strife against Spaniards and Mexicans aggregate many hundred, and that the correlative loss on the part of their enemies reaches several score, if not some hundred, lives. Few if any other aboriginal tribes of America have had so sanguinary a history as the Seri, and none other has at once so long and so bloody a record.

According to the consistent accounts of several survivors of conflict with the Seri, their chief weapons are arrows, stones, and clubs—though several survivors manifest greater fear of the throttling hands and rending teeth of the savage warriors than of all their artificial weapons combined. A striking feature of the recitals, indeed, is the rarity of reference to weapons; the ambushes or surrounds or chance meetings, with their disastrous or happy consequences, are commonly described with considerable detail; the carbines or rifles, the machetes and knives, or the deftly thrown riatas employed by the rancheros or vaqueros are mentioned with full appreciation of their serviceability; but the ordinary expressions concerning the despised yet dreaded Seri are precisely those employed in recounting conflicts with carnivorous beasts. When Andrés Noriega's kinswoman proudly related how he

648 726 on the settlements of Sonora. Many expeditions, fitted out at great expense, were sent against them, but in that barren land, destitute of water, the military parties suffered greatly in their campaigns, and succeeded little in their efforts to conquer the wary natives.

177 648 By 1850 probably every Seri between infancy and decrepitude had seen the proprietor and other inhabitants of the rancho of Don Pascual Encinas at Costa Rica where the Seris were abnormally tolerated and even encouraged to make themselves useful and unobjectionable. They yielded to indolent scavengering more than ever before; they substituted cast-off rags and barter-bought cotton cloth for their pelican robes and other primitive garments. They ate cooked food when it fell their way; half heartedly they adopted metal cutting implements and sought or stole nails and hoop-iron for arrow [191] points. Some acquired a smattering of Spanish and many came to sport Spanish names. Never, however, did more than one or two Seris come to live in a house, nor even to encompass the idea of making adobe. They had not learned to ride horses nor to burden them, but only to use them for immediate slaughter and consumption. They were acquainted with firearms, but it was not until years later that they learned to use them. In and about Rancho Costa Rica the Seris and the Mexicans lived for a time in mutual tolerance, certain depredations being allowed the Indians just as were the rodents of the rancheria.

648 ● 721 When, in 1855, Don Pascual Encinas experienced the loss of unusually large numbers of stock from Seri raids, he was aroused into announcing that a Seri head would be taken for each head of stock stolen. For a while the Indians seemed to acquiesce, but within a few days a group of Seri women "milled" a band of horses, caught and threw one so that its neck was broken, whereupon [252] they immediately sucked its blood, gorged on its intestines, and buried its quarters to "ripen" according to their custom. The vaqueros of the settlement were instructed to shoot the first Seri seen on the llano. Within two days the tribe was on the warpath and the war raged for a decade.

[p.262(B)]

175 if they were as hungry then as they are today, they would not stop to
648 spike a man up preparatory to serving him. Their only tools then were
266 rocks to use as hammers and hoop iron for knives, and these are in
114 universal use today.

[412] There is no doubt that the men were killed, but I think these mining men purposely exaggerated their findings, if any.

648 There is no doubt that the Seris were brave fighters, treacherous
721 murderers, sparing neither men, women or children on their raids,
727 killing ruthlessly. But there is one charge which cannot be brought against them, which cannot be said of many tribes north of the border. So far as I could find out, they never tortured nor scalped.

648 The Seris never took prisoners and they never inter-married with
721 other tribes, so their strain is pure.

727 There was one exception. Sixty or seventy years ago, the Seri
563 Chief Coyote Iguana and his band of warriors held up the stage between Hermosillo and Guaymas, and killed all except a handsome Spanish girl of the better class. This girl, Coyote Iguana made his wife and by her raised a family. One granddaughter still survived in 1924, and while more attractive than the general run of Seri, her complexion was fully as dark.

800 The Seris, Ishmaelites among the native tribes of Mexico---the most fascinating Indians in North America!

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123 *Reception Committee, Tiburon Island - 1935*

115 On the twenty-fifth of April, nineteen twenty-two, I engaged the services of Roberto Thompson, who with his father and grandfather

[text continues on p. 149]

642 BAND II *xika xnai kkoii* "they who live toward the south wind"
101 This group is commonly referred to as the Tastioteño. These
131 people roamed the coastal area from Guaymas to Bahia Kino.

BAND III *ta?eowkw kongkaak* "the people of Tiburon Island"

This band is referred to in the literature as the Seri or Tiburones. At one time their territory included only the northern and eastern coasts of Tiburon Island. Later it was extended to include the whole coastal strip of the mainland directly opposite the island.

BAND IV *?eno kongkaak* "the people of the desert"

The area this band occupied in the center of Tiburon Island is shown in Fig. 2.

642 BAND V *xnaamotat* "they who came from the direction of the
131 south wind"
173 The Seri believe that this band came originally from a region
628 south of Guaymas. It may have been the Upanguayma group
[101] mentioned in the literature. Its members came in contact with the members of Band II with whom they resided, apparently for a period of years. Whether the *xnaamotat* were Seri or non-Seri,
[197] I have been unable to ascertain. Since no informant suggests that this group spoke another language besides Seri, it seems reasonable to believe that it was simply a distinct dialect group.

642 The *xnaamotat* were a belligerent people and, after fighting
628 broke out between them and the members of Band II, they
721 traveled northward. Eventually they established themselves on
[131] the relatively small coastal strip located east of Punta Tepopa as shown in Fig. 2.

642 BAND VI *xika ?ast ano koii* "they who live in the mountains"
[101] This group, which has been recognized previously only by
[131] Griffen, inhabited San Esteban Island. It laid claim also to the greater part of the coast on the southern end of Tiburon Island. One informant stated that in earlier times this band had ranged over all of Tiburon Island except for the northern two-thirds of the eastern coast, but that they were slowly pushed southward by the movements of other groups.

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The third specification states that a kin group, to constitute a clan, must exhibit actual social integration. Murdock stresses the necessity of observing a positive group sentiment, such as would be manifested by organized collective activities or group functions, before the group can be characterized as a clan. An essential feature of this group sentiment is the inclusion of the wife as an integral member of her husband's kin group.

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[622]
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[583]
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This sort of social integration was indeed exhibited by the Seri kin group of each subdivision. It was, in fact, fostered by the isolation brought about by the inhabitants' reservation of hunting and fishing rights for themselves. Tension existed between certain subdivisions and, since there was no chief, the oldest capable male organized and led the fighting force of the clan. In times of need, the members of the group united to give mutual assistance. The groom-to-be could expect material aid from his fellow clan members in the payment of the bride price. Mutual assistance was given in the fulfillment of puberty ceremony and burial obligations. The men cooperated in their hunting and fishing expeditions. The women of the clan, including the in-married spouses, cooperated in the gathering and sharing of food. Everyone could attend the various fiestas. It is said that in the performance of these collective activities, close harmony generally prevailed.

BAND INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

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[648]

The division of the Seri tribe into bands was likely brought about through internal strife. During the period of band history known to the present-day Seri,[8] however, serious skirmishes seem to have been fought predominantly with non-Seri groups.[9]

BAND I

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Band I internal relations appear to have been relatively peaceful. The inhabitants of subdivisions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were fishermen as well as hunters and gatherers, whereas the people of subdivision 6 preferred to subsist on gathered food and wild game. Also, the members of Band I robbed cattle and horses, which pursuit brought reprisals from the Mexican ranchers. There was apparently considerable social intercourse among the six subdivisions, even to the extent that hunting rights of one were sometimes granted to inhabitants of a neighboring section.

Trouble developed when some members of Band I speared fish within the domain of Band V. Here also bitter fighting broke out, and any semblance of peaceful co-existence between the two groups was destroyed.

Except for the occurrence of several battles, relations between Bands I and III were peaceful.

Relations with non-Seri groups were not always peaceful. For many years the members of Band I were on friendly terms with the Papago; they often camped together and even intermarried. Due to a misunderstanding,[10] fighting erupted between the two groups and many people were killed in the years which followed.

BAND II

The external relations of Band II were decidedly turbulent. Although their primary base of operations was a coastal area, the people did not use the ocean as a source of food. They preferred beef and horse meat which was easily acquired by stealing animals from ranches. Here again the wrath of the ranchers and the government was incurred.

A small group of Yaqui eventually joined Band II and intermarried with them. The Seri claim that the Yaqui induced the warriors of this band to assault travelers on the road between Hermosillo and Guaymas. Coyote Iguana, who according to Seri tradition captured Lola Casanova, was of this band. This activity soon brought retribution from the government. Later, dissension arose between these Seri and the Yaqui.

The enmity and strife that occurred between Bands II and V were mentioned above.

BAND III

The history of the internal relations of this band on Tiburon Island seems to have been marked by periods of violence. Battles between subdivisions sometimes occurred; however, they were usually short-lived and soon forgotten. A major struggle once occurred when a shaman named *ʔapetia* "the invincible one" and warriors from subdivision 4 made repeated raids upon the neighboring subdivisions and killed many. Eventually, his enemies overcame their fear and destroyed the killer.

Although the inhabitants of Band III were hunters, gatherers, and fishermen, they began to rob cattle once they became established on the mainland. They too incurred the wrath of ranchers and the government.

BAND IV

Since the members of this band were, by choice, inhabiting an inland area of Tiburon Island, they lived in relative isolation as hunters and gatherers. Their primary contacts were with members of Band III with whom they intermarried.

BAND V

642 These people were apparently hunters, gatherers, and fishermen. It is said that they speared fish from the shore since they did not use *balsas*. They too apparently raided the ranches. Their warring nature has already been discussed; it resulted in the acquisition of few friends. However, several marriages between members of this band and members of subdivision 2 of Band III are said to have occurred.

BAND VI

The members of Band VI lived on San Esteban Island and were the most primitive of the tribe. They lived in huts made of driftwood and in caves and made extensive use of the *balsa*. Although they did not have the bow and arrow, they did become expert in the use of the spear. The people depended mainly on a seafood, iguana, and maguey diet.

621 628 578 Perhaps it was due to the confined living space on the small island with the accompanying lack of fresh water that relations between the four subdivisions were precarious and fights broke out frequently. The Seri today stress the fact that the members of this band were impetuous and unpredictable.

642 Their relations with the other bands were generally good however. Seri from Band III were free to visit San Esteban where they were well treated.

The San Esteban people seldom traveled to the mainland, and, since they spoke no Spanish, it is probable that they made no peaceful contact with non-Seri groups.

642 628 578 648 COLLAPSE OF THE BAND SYSTEM

Internal strife in the Seri tribe was probably a major factor in the establishment of the band system. External strife was a major factor in its downfall.

Reference has been made to the plundering, killings and rustling of cattle to which certain of the bands were dedicated. The concern of the Sonora government was aroused, and steps were taken to crush the rebellious groups. According to the present-day Seri, military action by army units and rancher outfits against the various bands resulted in the near-destruction of the whole tribe.[11]

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BAND V

It was stated above that this band fought with Band II and 628
then with Band I. Since Band V was likely killing cattle, they 648
also may have been harassed by soldiers. Eventually Band V [425]
abandoned its territory near Punta Tepopa and headed south
along the coast to a camp near present-day Bahia Kino. From [131]
this camp the entire group disappeared and was never seen again
by members of the other bands. The Seri of today believe that [173]
Band V either traveled inland or was destroyed by a non-Seri
force.

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BAND II

These people were rustlers and marauders. Government inter- 648
vention in the situation was inevitable. The Seri recount the 726
following final encounter between this group and the government
forces.

The entire remaining membership of Band II was hiding out in a nearly inaccessible swamp thicket at Bahia Kino. Knowing that an armed force of soldiers and ranchers was searching for them, the people left their camp to seek safety elsewhere. Almost immediately they were attacked by the superior armed force which proceeded to wipe out the whole group. A youth who had avoided capture is said to have reported the affair to the Seri on Tiburon Island. This event may have occurred during the Encinas [115]
Wars fought from 1855 to 1865.

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BAND VI

The members of this band on San Esteban Island were little 648
interested in the mainland and did not participate in the raids on 727
man and livestock there. Nevertheless, they were to share in the [721]
severe punishment meted out to the bands guilty of multitudi-
nous depredations.

Sometime after the massacre of Band II, a ship arrived at San Esteban, and many of the people were induced to go aboard. The rest of the inhabitants followed the ship to a camp on the eastern side of Tiburon Island where they were to receive gifts. As the people congregated, they were herded into a stone corral. Apparently, some of the San Esteban men were killed at this time. The rest of them, along with the women and children, were taken to Santa Rosa point on the mainland. Here, the Seri say, more of the men were killed. The remaining men were strung together by wire and led away, never to return.

The San Esteban women and children, along with some Tiburon Island women and children (of Band III), were taken in

so named must be of the same sex as the first. The significance of land ownership needs further investigation.

Many of the Seri still prefer, when possible, to live in their chosen band area. Sometimes a person, when he is approaching death, will ask to be taken to his own i?iziiting, where he can die and be buried in the area of his choice.

NOTES

1. Due to printing limitations, stress on Seri words has been omitted, and several orthographic symbol changes have been made for this paper. The phonetic values of the symbols used are the following: p is voiceless labial stop; t is vl. dental stop; k is vl. velar stop; ? is glottal stop; ʃ is vl. labial flat spirant; w is vl. labial grooved-rounded spirant; s is vl. alveolar spirant; z is vl. alveo-palatal spirant; l is vl. lateral spirant; h is vl. velar spirant; x is vl. back velar spirant; m is labial nasal; n is dental nasal; ŋ is velar nasal; y is palatal semivowel; i is a high close front vowel; e is a low close front vowel; a is a low open central vowel; o is a mid close back vowel.

2. These data were compiled during field trips to the Seri camps during the years 1956-61, the studies being carried out under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The principal informant was R. Herrera T. whose information was checked with and supplemented by nine of the older members of the tribe. I am indebted to my colleague, David Thomas, who read an earlier draft of this paper and made helpful suggestions.

3. 1) W. J. McGee, "The Seri Indians," *Bureau of American Ethnology, Annual Report*, No. 17, Part 1. Washington, 1898. 2) A. L. Kroeber, "The Seri," *Southwest Museum Papers*, No. 6. Los Angeles, 1931. 3) W. B. Griffen, "Notes on Seri Indian Culture, Sonora, Mexico," *Latin American Monograph Series*, No. 10, Gainesville, 1959.

4. It will be noted that between subdivision 3 and 4 on Fig. 3 there is an unnumbered area, the status of which is uncertain.

5. Kroeber states that McGee's concept of Seri maternal lineages crystallized into totemic clans with matron rule seem a fantasy. In Kroeber's opinion, "The Seri may never have had sibs or clans; but the fact that they appear to lack them now is no positive evidence that they were without them three centuries ago. Shifts of residence, contraction of territory, shrinkage of numbers, amalgamation of distinct bands, may well have obliterated much of such social fabric as they once possessed."

Griffen discusses the nature of the former Seri bands and states, "they may have been patrilineal and exogamous. The criteria . . . that Julian Steward has exposited for the formation of exogamous, patrilineal bands . . .(are and presumably would have been met formerly in the Seri habitat." Griffen lists other aspects of this type of band which are also verified to some extent by his data. From reading his material, it is obvious that he suspects the existence of clans at some earlier period. He emphasizes the need for further investigation.

6. G. P. Murdock, *Social Structure*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1949.

7. Marriages were usually contracted within the band.

8. As Kroeber points out, their memory likely covers only the latter part of the period of Spanish contacts.

9. The Seri recall nothing of Seri-Pima contacts and little of Seri-Apache relations.

10. The story is related that one day some Seri entered a cave where they found several Papago jugs filled with seeds. Being hungry, the people ate the seeds and left some arrows as token payment. The Seri say that the Papago apparently believed the arrows were intended as an insult. Fighting broke out soon afterward.

11. The Seri concept of the band annihilations is seen to be in contradiction to McGee's statement (p. 132): "Concordantly with their primary characteristic, the Seri have avoided ethnic and demotic union beyond the narrow limits of their own kindred; and even of these they seem to have cast out parts, annihilating the Guayma and Upanguayma, displacing and nearly destroying the Tepoka, and outlawing individuals and (apparently) small groups."